

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS: EXAMINING THE EFFECTS OF LONG-TERM PARTICIPATION IN THE MONROE INSTITUTE PROGRAMS

Cam Danielson

Included in this document are the responses from 18 participants.

In 2010 Cam Danielson presented a report detailing a study which was undertaken as a follow-up to his 2008 investigation into the effects of long-term participation in TMI programs, with interviews of individuals who attended 3 or more programs.

He explained that three questions emerged that become the lenses or frames of reference for telling their stories:

Question #1 or What is on the Other Side of the Rainbow?

There is an ancient tale of a young man who meets a famous relative in a dream where he is given a view of life on earth from the far reaches of the heavens. The comprehension of the interconnections or relationships to the order underlying the world upward through the heavens left the dreamer in a state of amazement. He had never envisioned the universe by looking back on the planet earth. It shifted everything for him in terms of how he thought of himself and where he came from. The expansiveness he felt was transformative. No longer was his horizon (his boundaries on the world) primarily limited to a small community of friends and family. There was more to explore and discover than he ever felt possible, and his sense of self now included not only all that he had witnessed and experienced but the source of guidance as well.

This centuries old story was a constant backdrop in my interviews.

Each participant struck me as a modern day astronaut who metaphorically was sharing experiences of looking back on the world. On more than one occasion I was reminded of a sonnet Shakespeare wrote on the nature of love, which he describes as “the star to every wandering bark,/Whose worth is unknown, although his height be taken” (116.7-8). Like ships upon the sea, the participants in this study navigate their lives on the basis of a reality that lies beyond the physical limits of this world. Rather than orienting themselves in terms of identity and purpose on the expectations of others, generally or specifically, they find their location - their sense of place and direction - in relationship to the unfathomable depth and infinite dimensions of love.

There are a number of implications to be drawn from a self-orientation based on a transpersonal perspective. From my interviews I can capture the following elements:

- 1) *Engagement of Multiple Intelligences*: development of multiple forms of expression including music, art, and physical movement (dance, *athletics*, *body work*) to supplement abstract reasoning as a way of knowing
- 2) *Anticipation of Liminal States*: being in transition on a more frequent basis and the increased interest in the white space or the unformed dimension of possibility that exists between two or more existential planes
- 3) *Relationship with Inner Guidance*: being present to an interior silence or transpersonal awareness while simultaneously interacting in the world
- 4) *Playfulness towards Life*: being open to the dynamic forces of change without succumbing to socially accepted beliefs, biases, or assumptions regarding their meaning
- 5) *Compassion for Oneself and Others*: the essence behind the instinctual needs of human existence which shows up in a qualitative shift in regard to self and others

Question #2 or How does the Spirit move across the Face of the Earth?

Among the many experiences that entail a single lifetime which are the ones that provide a sense of someone's identity? It would be easy to say that every experience is a microcosm of the whole, but that only begs the question of what is the whole. And yet there are certain times and places where we know ourselves "without all of the baggage we have accumulated in this life." For the participants in this study there were a number of points along their life journeys critical to self-knowledge, even if at the time it wasn't always clear. The interview process was autobiographical in nature giving the participants an opportunity to review and reconnect with life events that surfaced from their memories. What came out of this process was telling both for what it revealed of each individual and the themes common to the development of who they are today.

It is important to note, that TMI is not a "vision" factory.

Participating in the audio-guidance process does not imply that all you have to do is lie passively and something will happen. TMI is a catalyst for those whom I have described as outsiders, individuals who are not content to seek stability through conformity within their social context. They are self-transforming because they live under the aspect of their Higher Self, what Wilson refers to as "the Will to more life" or Jung refers to as "the drive towards individuation." They are living on the edge of the collective; scouts in the work of extending the boundaries of consciousness. For these individuals there is a much closer proximity of their conscious and unconscious being. They experience the immense generative forces of the life around us and the life within us as the reason for their unceasing quest for wholeness. TMI serves as a transcendent function that extends consciousness in a way that proves instrumental to more abundant life. This is why returning to TMI for the participants in this study is like returning home after being adrift among people sleep-walking through life; encumbered with job performances, project plans, meetings, and schedules.

To come home to TMI is to experience the awe of life is limitlessness.

It is not unlike the goal of philosophers and poets of previous eras who wanted to form communities, academies, even mystical orders.

How they happened to come to TMI is never quite as simple or straightforward as circumstances may imply. The synchronicity behind the event is part of the profundity of the experience for them. That there is a drive to self-realization in choosing more abundant life (what is meant by wholeness) is what ultimately leads the outsider from the path of exile. Integration takes place through encounters with, what Jung called "the life instinct [. . . which] comes to us from within" (Memories, Dreams, Reflections 349). Over and over, this is the role of TMI in providing the tools and the process for "cleansing the doors of perception." And the result is that "everything appears as it is, infinite" (Blake, Marriage of Heaven & Hell, 44).

Question #3 or What Difference Does this Make to Anyone Else?

The Quixotic spirit that pervades the lives of the TMI research group is not to be judged by those who are ready to settle for comfort, security, stability and order, in other words, what is already known.

The view of such individuals is predictably incredulous, even contemptuous of all that is incompatible with what they perceive as good judgment. But every judgment is "partial and prejudiced, since it chooses one particular possibility at the cost of all others [. . .] As a rule it is never based on what is new, what is still unknown, and what might considerably enrich [consciousness]" (The Portable Jung 275). This is the principle difference I have come to appreciate in the individuals who have made TMI a cornerstone in their life journeys. In their desire to embrace the life within them and the life around them, the inner and the outer, the divine and the human, they are "driven forward by dim apprehensions of things too obscure for [their] existing language" - the something that exists before we are conscious of it. What is this something but the "everchanging center of things," according to Robert Pirsig, "a dynamic quality that is the pre-intellectual cutting edge of reality, the source of all things, completely simple and always new." (133).

References

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The full reports, along with summaries of the participants responses:are available in the Monroe Archives: